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Farm Bill Program Cut-Off Dates Announced

Albuquerque, NM-The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that October 17, 2008 is the cut-off date for sign-up for its 2009 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

“While we accept applications year around for these program, we have cut-off dates for consideration for funding in a specific fiscal year,” said, Mike Neubeiser, NRCS resource conservationist. “We are urging local farmers and ranchers to apply as early as possible.”

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is available to individuals and entities with working farms and ranches (and non-industrial private forests) that face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources. It provides payments for cost incurred in environmental quality improvements.

Individual producers on Tribal lands, and Tribal governments, are eligible to apply. Agricultural producers with federal land grazing permits are also eligible, and if selected for a contract, may receive financial assistance to implement approved practices on their federal allotment.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for private landowners to develop and improve high quality habitat that supports wildlife populations. The 2008 Farm Bill has changed the eligibility requirements of the program, and non-agricultural, as well as state, county, or local government-owned lands are now ineligible for WHIP.

Land eligible for WHIP includes private agriculture land, non-industrial private forest land, and Tribal land. The 2008 Farm Bill authorizes WHIP cost-share payments to be made to landowners to develop other types of wildlife habitat including habitat developed on pivot corners and irregular areas.

How these conservation provisions may apply to a specific farm or ranch, as always, is best answered by a visit to the local Natural Resources Conservation Service field office.

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